



Security Council

Seventy-second year

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Wednesday, 22 February 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
France	Mr. Delattre
Italy	Mr. Lambertini
Japan	Mr. Okamura
Kazakhstan	Mr. Vassilenko
Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
Senegal	Mr. Ciss
Sweden	Mr. Skau
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Ms. Sison
Uruguay	Mr. Rivas

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kurz.

Mr. Kurz: It is an honour to address the Security Council today in my role as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Allow me to express my condolences on the passing away of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin of the Russian Federation.

With 57 participating States, the OSCE is the largest regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. For decades, the OSCE has been an important partner of the United Nations. As members can imagine, chairing the OSCE is not an easy job. Like at the United Nations, there are many different interests and opinions that often make it hard to find consensus and to achieve progress on the challenges that we face. But even if it is sometimes hard, there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation. It is the only way to achieve peace, security and stability.

Austria has taken over the OSCE chairmanship at a critical moment. Everywhere we look, there are grave threats to peace and security: war and destruction in places like Syria and eastern Ukraine; serious violations of international law and signs of increasing nationalism; and radicalization and terrorism within our societies. The consequences are the rising anxiety of the people and increasing mistrust among States.

Given these challenges, our chairmanship will focus on the following priorities. First, we want to contribute to defusing existing conflicts. Secondly, we will create

a platform to assist States in their efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism. Thirdly, we will do what we can to help rebuild trust and confidence among the participating States of the OSCE.

Armed conflicts have caused much suffering, displacement and destruction in parts of the OSCE area. There can be no military solutions to these conflicts. We have to find ways to enable political solutions. One of the central issues the OSCE deals with is the crisis in and around Ukraine. This crisis — the annexation of Crimea, the flow of arms into the Donbas, the role of the Russian Federation, the implementation of the Minsk agreements, and the repeated acts of violence — is regularly discussed in the OSCE, just as it is in the United Nations.

During my first visit to eastern Ukraine in January, I saw the unacceptable situation of civilians there. We must improve the living conditions of the local population, especially along the contact line. To that end, access for humanitarian organizations is crucial. The level of violence that we saw a few weeks ago is unacceptable. It remains vital that all sides fully implement the Minsk agreements and strictly respect the ceasefire to which they have repeatedly committed themselves. The OSCE, with its Trilateral Contact Group, demonstrated its crucial role in brokering the ceasefire.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission has prevented a worsening of the situation through its monitoring and reporting and facilitated the repair of critical infrastructure, such as electricity and water supply. We now have to support the Special Monitoring Mission in fully carrying out its mandate. We want to increase the number of monitors on the ground, improve the technical equipment for monitoring, and extend the operating hours along the contact line. We will continue working to make concrete steps towards full the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Forces must disengage and heavy weapons must be withdrawn. As Chairperson-in-Office, we will assist all efforts to achieve progress on the other conflict situations in the OSCE area, in particular regarding the Transnistrian settlement process, the conflict in Georgia and the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh.

Besides classic conflicts, one other major challenge to security is radicalization and terrorism. Both threaten the internal stability of States, the rule of law and our basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression

and the freedom of religion or belief. More than 10,000 people from the OSCE area have joined Da'esh in order to rape and kill in its name in Syria, Iraq and Libya. These fighters not only cause terrible suffering in those countries, but they also pose a threat to the security of the OSCE countries when they return. In the OSCE region, there are different dynamics for radicalization, but what we have in common is that the most vulnerable group to be radicalized is young people.

To better understand these dynamics and identify ways to effectively address the root causes and triggers of radicalization, I have appointed Mr. Peter Neumann as my Special Representative on Radicalization. He will look for best practices, share them with participating States and make concrete recommendations on how to improve the fight against radicalization and violent extremism. If terrorists cooperate globally, States must do the same in order to fight terrorism more effectively.

No matter whether we want to solve conflicts or fight against terrorism, what is always needed as a basis for international cooperation is trust. Rebuilding trust among States in the OSCE area is probably the most difficult task. As a neutral country, Austria has always been a bridge-builder between the East and the West and a good place for dialogue. As OSCE Chair, Austria will strive to foster open and constructive dialogue as a basis for finding common solutions to the challenges facing the OSCE. In the OSCE, security concerns are often at the core of mistrust. Therefore, the Austrian chairmanship will also try to resume discussions on conventional arms control in Europe. That is in the interests of every single participating State.

In line with the mandate we received at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg, Austria will seek to launch a structured dialogue on current and future challenges to security in the OSCE area. Cybersecurity and social and economic cooperation — two issues that we discussed in Vienna recently — are areas where everybody stands to gain from more cooperation. Success in these areas will lead to more trust. The same is true for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Together, we can strengthen the cohesiveness and resilience of our societies to better counter threats to our security. I welcome the establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office in Vienna. It will enable even stronger cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations. We both will benefit from more information

exchange, operational coordination and technical support, especially in the field.

I hope that with these priorities, the OSCE and Austria as its Chair can make a contribution to strengthening a rules-based global order and to advancing the goals, values and principles of the United Nations.

The President: I thank Mr. Kurz for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Mr. Kurz, for his comprehensive briefing.

We should like to see growing cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, especially its Chapter VIII. Such cooperation must be regular and multifaceted, encompassing all dimensions of security. The OSCE is designed to assist United Nations mechanisms in the area of their purview within the framework of its mandate. It is important to take into account the comparative advantages of the two organizations and to avoid duplication and the waste of resources. We should like to see constructive cooperation with the Austrian chairmanship of the OSCE and we share its key priorities, aimed at conflict resolution, combatting radicalization and extremism, the restoration of trust among States, and the strengthening of the institutional foundation of the Organization.

The OSCE must strive to carry out those functions for which it was created, serving as a platform for equitable dialogue and collective decision-making on security issues. Its focus should be on the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and cyberthreats; the harmonization of integration processes; support for traditional values and the protection of the rights of national minorities; combatting neo-Nazism; reform of the OSCE, including the development of its charter; and the organization of the electoral monitoring work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We are ready to contribute to that.

We see the greatest potential in combating transnational threats, particularly in the context of the

immigration crisis, the fight against human trafficking, xenophobia and discrimination, and especially in the protection of the rights of national, religious and linguistic minorities.

We have noted the evolution of the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, with major collaboration between the OSCE secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in combating trafficking in drugs and small arms, terrorism, organized crime, corruption and money-laundering, as well as in the areas of combating human trafficking and illegal migration. The OSCE's Ministerial Council meetings in Basel in 2014 and Belgrade in 2015 adopted declarations on the issue of cooperation between the two organizations, strengthening the OSCE's role in implementing important United Nations decisions, in particular the Security Council's anti-terrorism resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2249 (2015). Last summer in Kaliningrad, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, organized a seminar for OSCE participating States' focal points on implementing resolution 1540 (2004).

In the area of international security information, the OSCE complements the global United Nations efforts to develop confidence-building measures through the use of information and communications technologies. However, there have also been alarming attempts to introduce monitoring mechanisms similar to those of the United Nations into OSCE practices, as well as non-consensus documents of the General Assembly and Human Rights Council. We take a generally positive view of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in the field, for example, through the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We appreciate their collaboration in the Geneva talks on Transcaucasia, which have been an important factor in establishing direct dialogue between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We support the Austrian chairship for its backing of the OSCE's continuing efforts to help settle regional conflicts, and we are willing to cooperate in reaching settlements in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh.

It is to be hoped that 2017 can bring peace and a political solution in eastern Ukraine, where the armed conflict, which has now lasted more than three years, continues to take new civilian lives. The residents of Donetsk and Luhansk have suffered for their right to

freedom and special status within the Ukrainian State. It is vital that full compliance with the Minsk package of measures be finally achieved if we are to grant the region and its inhabitants the possibility of a peaceful life and democratic self-government and to restore their broken economic ties to the rest of Ukraine. All of that is provided for in the Minsk agreement, as adopted in resolution 2202 (2015).

In that regard, we believe that we have a proven and well-established model for settling the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine, one element of which is the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. We do not see any practical benefits of duplicating the functions of the Special Monitoring Mission through any new types of international structure. We hope that the Austrian chairmanship will continue to keep the Mission's objectivity under control, while giving direction to its representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group and its subgroups on developing a direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict.

While the OSCE has sufficient resources in the area of conflict resolution, it is important to act extremely cautiously in this sensitive and delicate process and to bear in mind three key principles — that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, with the direct participation of the parties and respect for their interests, and within existing formats.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Russia considers the OSCE to be an important mechanism for building a fair and indivisible security system for Europe as a whole, and is involved in strengthening its role and authority. We believe firmly that in order to improve the OSCE's relevance it is essential to clearly define the priorities for its activities and to create a charter for the organization.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to welcome Foreign Minister Kurz to the Security Council and thank him for his briefing today. His chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), together with Austria's hosting of the OSCE, as well as parts of the United Nations, shows just how central his country is to international cooperation and the rule-based system.

Sadly, as we heard here yesterday (see S/PV.7886), the rule-based system is under threat. It is a threat that we talk about often in this Chamber, but to the residents of cities such as Marinka, in Ukraine, that threat is a horrifying daily reality. For the past three

years, the people there have lived in fear, subject to the daily unrelenting dangers that have become the norm on the front line in eastern Ukraine. Residents there speak of daily sniper fire and shelling, and the daily scramble for shelter. For nearly three years, they have survived without gas supplies in the face of plummeting temperatures every winter. Those are the consequences of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

That is what happens when the rule-based system is attacked. We cannot allow it to become the new normal, and we must use all the tools at our disposal in response. The OSCE has a critical role to play, and I would particularly like to commend the role of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, working tirelessly under the able direction of Chief Monitor Apakan. It is thanks to the bravery of the OSCE's monitors that we know what is going on in places like Marinka. It is thanks to them that we know that ceasefire violations have already reached record highs this year.

It is unacceptable that the Mission continues to be fired on and face restrictions on its access. Such actions, so often perpetrated by the separatists, only fuel suspicions that they are concealing activity that is at odds with the Minsk agreements. I hope, therefore, that we can all be clear today that aggression towards monitors must stop and that the Mission must be given unrestricted access to all of Ukraine, including the disengagement areas and those parts of the border with Russia that are not under Ukraine's control.

As we heard yesterday, the long-term solution to the situation in eastern Ukraine requires Russia to end its destabilizing activities in the region, comply with its commitments under the Minsk agreements, withdraw its weapons and personnel, use its considerable influence over the separatists to bring an end to the killing and return Crimea to its rightful place as part of Ukraine. That is the only meaningful path to long-term peace in Ukraine, and until it is taken, the sanctions against Russia must remain in place.

Beyond Ukraine, we should not lose sight of the Council's need to work closely with the Austrian chairmanship of the OSCE in resolving other issues affecting the region and in helping to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. Those issues include the protracted conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh. We also value the

vital role that the OSCE plays in risk reduction in the region, and we welcome the launch of the structured dialogue. We support the Chairperson-in-Office's focus on youth and radicalization, where the OSCE, with its cross-dimensional approach to security, can add real value.

If the OSCE is to respond to those and other challenges, we must also continue to strengthen it. One way to do that is through strong appointments, and I am pleased that the United Kingdom has put forward an excellent candidate for the post of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, in a sign of our continued commitment to the organization. We are also pleased that our Ambassador to the OSCE is chairing the OSCE Human Dimension Committee this year and working closely with the Austrian chairship.

In conclusion, events in eastern Ukraine have reinforced just how important the OSCE is to international cooperation. The work being done there is vital to the beleaguered residents of Marinka and to all Ukrainians in the eastern part of the country. Sadly, events in Ukraine highlight the threats that countries in the OSCE area, and the rule-based system as a whole, continue to face. If we are to respond to them effectively, we must continue to strengthen the OSCE, and with it the Security Council's cooperation.

Mr. Vassilenko (Kazakhstan): I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for convening this important meeting and to warmly welcome the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Mr. Sebastian Kurz.

Despite our collective efforts, we are still far from realizing the hopes enshrined seven years ago in the OSCE's Astana Commemorative Declaration and outlined in the organization's founding documents. The Eurasian dimension of the OSCE security space is at the heart of the Astana Declaration and should remain our focus. It is also the area where we may be able to have the greatest positive impact, replacing zero-sum games with win-win scenarios. To achieve that ambition, we will have to overcome the growing threats that are fuelled by shifts in technology, the rise of radicalism and nationalism, pandemics, economic turbulence, the proliferation of nuclear materials and unprecedented numbers of refugees.

The continuing crisis in Ukraine has also shown us how a national tragedy can have global consequences.

It has undermined the security of us all and has exposed stark differences in the way that countries approach security policy.

In the wake of such challenges, Kazakhstan fully supports calls to strengthen the OSCE, its legal status and its institutions. We support in particular the efforts promoted by the Austrian chairmanship and others to strengthen cooperative security, including by strengthening conventional arms control mechanisms and modernizing the Vienna document. We look forward to further discussions on the modalities of the structured dialogue that the Chairperson-in-Office mentioned.

Let me now propose some recommendations on bilateral cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

First, the OSCE should continue to be a good partner for countries in transition. It can do that by continuing to promote the principles of good governance, the rule of law, institution-building and the nurturing of a new political culture, working with the participating States and not on them. Secondly, the United Nations should step up cooperation with the OSCE on the promotion of sustainable development, where it has long experience. That partnership should play an active role in shaping the debate regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that the OSCE and the United Nations should work together to end extreme poverty and ensure that we are the last generation to live with climate change as a threat to the future of all of us.

We strongly share the priorities of the Austrian chairmanship in the OSCE's second dimension, and we would like to thank the Austrian chairmanship for appointing the representative of Kazakhstan to chair the Economic and Environmental Committee. Within the context of that second dimension, we fully support the main theme of "Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships for Security", chosen by the Austrian chairmanship as its slogan. We look forward to working together with the Austrian chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat in holding a productive second preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum during the Astana Expo-2017, on the subject of future energy. It will be a major event in which more than 110 countries and 18 international organizations will participate.

We consider improving connectivity to be a key tool of long-term development. The OSCE has a part to play

in promoting regional trade and transport integration and, ultimately, in the formation of a common economic space from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As a country, we remain committed to the idea of Greater Eurasia, which can bring together the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative in an effort to create a common space of mutually beneficial economic development from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

Thirdly, given the OSCE's special attention to transnational threats, we see particular merit in deepening cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Kazakhstan supports the OSCE in signing joint action plans with United Nations agencies. It is also of benefit to the United Nations to work closely with the OSCE — the world's largest regional security grouping — on transnational threats. Those threats range from the spread of nuclear weapons to countering all forms of regional transnational crime, including the trafficking in persons, drugs and weapons. We welcome the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the OSCE and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to support regional work on resolution 1540 (2004). That reaffirms that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

Fourthly, Afghanistan's security, political and economic progress and the withdrawal of international forces will continue to have major implications for the OSCE. The exchange of military information and contacts, particularly in the border areas, is of paramount importance. Security in Afghanistan's border areas is also critical to developing new trade and transport corridors. This is a sphere in which there is great potential for the OSCE to build on existing cooperation with the United Nations.

Fifthly, we think that we need to step up our joint efforts in the fight against human trafficking, which is a key issue for both the United Nations and the OSCE. We call in particular for more active cooperation between the OSCE and UNODC, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That must be done through a comprehensive human rights-based approach to global crime within the OSCE-initiated Alliance against Trafficking in Persons

and under the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

Last but not least, let me say that Kazakhstan has always given the OSCE its best. We have supported the organization and worked with all our partners within it to strengthen it and help it to adapt to new challenges before, during and after our chairmanship in 2010. Today, we are prepared to give it one of our brightest and most capable diplomats: the two-time Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, whom we have nominated for the position of Secretary General of the OSCE. If elected, he would surely serve the best interests of the OSCE and help steer it steadily forward in these complex times.

Let me end by stressing that the OSCE remains one of the United Nations key partner organizations. The nature of our cooperation has to become closer and, at the same time, more expansive, comprehensive and multidimensional, so that it can address all issues of concern for human well-being and security.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Mr. Sebastian Kurz, for his briefing in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We also congratulate Austria on its assumption of the chairmanship of the OSCE and on its commitment to maintaining peace in Europe.

Bolivia believes that it is important to highlight the work being done by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in its various areas of operation and in maintaining channels of dialogue with different actors. We believe that all conflicts between States should be addressed in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international human rights law, always with the aim of resolving them peacefully and, at the same time, respecting the principles of the non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the non-use or threat of force, sovereignty and independence.

As we have previously mentioned in the Chamber, Bolivia believes that regional and subregional organizations can play a very important role in maintaining regional stability and security and can contribute decisively in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. On the other hand, it is important to identify the circumstances and action taken by NATO that

have contributed to causing conflict situations or to interventionism.

We hope that communication and coordination channels between the United Nations and the OSCE will be maintained and strengthened for the benefit of regional and international peace and security.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Foreign Minister Kurz for his briefing on the planned activities under the Austrian chairmanship.

The track record of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) clearly demonstrates the unique and significant role that that organization plays in Europe. The United States fully supports the organization's comprehensive approach to security. We look to the OSCE and its independent institutions and field missions to assist all 57 participating States with the full implementation of their OSCE commitments, and we look to the OSCE to hold those States accountable when they fail to do so.

As Ambassador Nikki Haley made clear yesterday, the United States is committed to the institutions that help keep Europe safe (see S/PV.7886). We commend the long-standing commitment and ongoing efforts of the OSCE in support of regional security. From promoting peaceful resolutions to conflicts to working with Governments on the rule of law and anti-corruption, the OSCE plays a key role in strengthening security and stability, addressing humanitarian needs of conflict-afflicted populations and promoting good governance in the region. We believe that the organization should also continue its focus on supporting civil society and independent media and on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination throughout the OSCE region. We urge Mr. Kurz to make the full implementation of all human dimension commitments by all OSCE participating States a priority of his chairmanship.

The commitment and bravery of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine deserves particular recognition. As recent weeks have seen, an increase in violence, including the use of heavy weapons, civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure have compounded a desperate humanitarian situation. The Special Monitoring Mission has worked with humanitarian organizations on both sides of the line of contact to ensure that civilians enduring freezing conditions, on top of the relentless fighting, have access to heat, water and electricity. OSCE monitors risk their own safety to fulfil their mandate to document

ceasefire violations and to provide critical information of the situation on the ground. They deserve our respect and support as they press all sides to bring an immediate end to violence. They must be granted full and unfettered access and safe passage to better perform their mission, particularly in areas held by Russian-backed separatists.

We continue to be concerned about threats made to the Special Monitoring Mission and underscore the importance of all sides to protect them and their work in monitoring the situation on the ground. The United States continues to support the Minsk agreements and their full and immediate implementation, as the best path to resolve the conflict and alleviate the suffering in eastern Ukraine. This should remain a priority of the OSCE and we reiterate our call on Russia to adhere to its commitments. We must not forget the situation in occupied Crimea. We once again call for an end to the Russian occupation and attempted annexation of the peninsula.

The United States remains fully committed to supporting the OSCE's efforts in other areas as well. In Georgia, the OSCE plays a positive role in keeping all sides accountable and we encourage the Organization to remain actively engaged as the conflict with Russia in Georgia's occupied territories continues to undermine European security. As a participant in the Geneva international discussions, the United States looks forward to continuing our work with the OSCE to find a peaceful resolution that guarantees Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. As one of the three co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States supports the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The sides have made progress over the years towards a comprehensive settlement through this process. We call on the sides to enter into negotiations and complete confidence-building measures agreed last spring. This conflict cannot be resolved by force.

We are firmly committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Transnistria conflict. We believe that the 5+2 talks can play an important role in resolving the conflict, but any 5+2 meeting must deliver concrete results. The OSCE mission must have unrestricted access to all of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, and we call on the Transnistrian authorities to grant OSCE monitors consistent, unfettered access.

Finally, we would like to highlight the OSCE's vital role in supporting the implementation of our decisions in the Security Council. The OSCE's support for two Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1540 (2004), is part of the global effort to address weapons' proliferation, and resolution 1325 (2000) to end violence against women and ensure women are at the centre of efforts to resolve conflicts and counter violent extremism.

The United States applauds the OSCE for its work to reinforce security throughout Europe. The United Nations-OSCE relationship is central to the Council's work in the region. We look forward to continuing and deepening the decades of dialogue and cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, for his briefing.

Yesterday's open debate (see S/PV.7886) was a good opportunity for us to recall the major contribution made by the OSCE to promoting security and preventing conflicts in Europe. However, the debate was also a stark reminder that OSCE confidence-building measures are increasingly necessary in light of attempts to forcibly alter the status quo by coercion in some parts of Europe.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE is exemplary in supporting the Security Council in maintaining peace and security at the regional level. The OSCE has always held the conviction that maintaining an international order based on the rule of law that condemns the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State, as well as building confidence among member States through efforts for dialogue and transparency, will bring peace and stability in Europe and the international community. Based on this belief, the OSCE has been taking a comprehensive approach, which encompasses not only politico-military security, but also economic, environmental and human aspects. Japan, as one of OSCE's Asian partners, firmly shares its belief and comprehensive approach. We are pleased to have expanded our cooperation with the OSCE over the past quarter-century.

The situation in Ukraine, as Japan stressed at yesterday's open debate, is of grave concern for the

entire international community. It poses a serious challenge to the international order governed by the rule of law. This is a matter of principle. We have contributed to Ukraine by dispatching a Japanese expert to the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE in the light of its critical tasks. In addition, Japan is supporting the country's reform efforts to become a more resilient society.

The OSCE is playing an important role in mediation, including in the situations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh. We applaud the OSCE's hands-on approach to enhancing capacities and resilience in response to emerging issues, such as violent extremism, as well as humanitarian crises involving refugees and immigrants. We look forward to further cooperation with the OSCE on a wide range of issues, including security and counter-terrorism through strengthened border management, election observation missions and women's empowerment.

I would like to mention my first-hand experience with the contribution of the OSCE. From 1999 to 2000, I was seconded to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), where I worked with a young Austrian diplomat named Mr. Jan Kickert, who is present in the Chamber as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria. The OSCE was at that time one of the four pillars of our international efforts aimed at the reconstruction of Kosovo. The OSCE and UNMIK cooperated closely in conducting the first local election in October 2000, and it was quite successful. Of course, the path to democracy in Kosovo was not an easy task, but today peace and democracy have taken root in Kosovo to a certain extent. We are very proud of that and it is due, in great part, to the efforts of the OSCE.

Asia and Europe have a certain interconnectivity on peace and security-related issues. Just as tensions in Europe have an impact on the entire international community, including Asia, increased tensions in Asia affect the stability of Europe. Japan is committed to deepening its cooperation with the States members of the OSCE as part of its joint efforts with the OSCE to maintain and consolidate the international order based on the rule of law.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me join others in thanking Foreign Minister Kurz for his briefing this morning and for his leadership as Chairperson-in-Office of the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The European security order continues to be seriously challenged. The OSCE, as the largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, has an indispensable role to play in upholding the rules-based order in the region and in sustaining peace. In the light of that, we welcome and offer our full and active support for the Austrian OSCE chairmanship and the efforts of Minister Kurz.

Based on commonly agreed principles and commitments, as enshrined most notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, the OSCE offers a unique platform for dialogue on European peace and security. At present, the principle that States should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State is being violated. Breaches of that core principle, which is enshrined in the United Nations Charter as well as in the OSCE Acquis, are of fundamental concern to all of us. European security, like the security of other regions, depends on a rules-based international order where the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, large and small, is respected.

As we also highlighted in yesterday's open debate on conflicts in Europe, the comprehensive concept of security remains a strength and an added value provided by the OSCE and must be upheld (see S/PV.7886). Respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a precondition for our joint security. It is therefore worrying that the OSCE human-dimension and autonomous institutions — the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities — are under pressure. They are key assets across the conflict cycle and are needed today more than ever. The OSCE Chairmanship has an important role to play as the guardian of those principles and commitments, and in preserving the comprehensive concept of security and those independent institutions.

Today, our fundamental principles continue to be violated by Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its military actions in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, its political independence and right to freely choose its security

arrangements must be fully respected. We reaffirm our strong support for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which much be given full, safe and unhindered access throughout the country.

The so-called protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh also constitute long-lasting violations of our common OSCE acquis. They must be resolved in accordance with international law and OSCE principles and commitments. The Chairs of the Minsk Group have a special responsibility in bringing those processes forward.

There is an obvious need for strong conventional arms-control instruments and confidence-building measures, which contribute to transparency and predictability. In that context, we would especially like to highlight this year's launch of a structured dialogue in the OSCE on current and future challenges and risks aimed at exploring possibilities in the military area for building confidence and reducing risk.

We welcome the Chairmanship's intention to mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities. Gender aspects, including the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), must be an integral part of all our security-related work, in Vienna as well as in the field missions.

In conclusion, in a speech to the Security Council open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace on 10 January, Secretary-General Guterres underlined the fundamental importance of restoring trust among Member States so as to prevent and avoid conflict (see S/PV.7857). We therefore welcome the Austrian chairmanship's focus on building trust — a trust that can be regained only through restored respect for common principles and commitments, and through deeds, not words.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the presence at today's meeting of His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, and we thank him for his briefing.

The world today is filled with various types of challenges. Countries are interdependent, and their security is interconnected. While the United Nations is at the core of the international collective-security architecture, regional and subregional organizations

enjoy unique advantages in resolving hot-spot issues in their respective regions. China supports enhancing the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, so as to jointly safeguard international peace and security.

The cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations should, while steadfastly upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, seek vigorously to promote dialogue and consultation aimed at addressing regional and hot-spot issues, actively engage in preventive diplomacy, resolve disputes through peaceful means and defuse conflicts. All relevant actions by the regional and subregional organizations concerned should observe the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, in particular respect for the principles of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States.

The OSCE is an important partner of the United Nations. In recent years, the OSCE has been actively engaged in preventive diplomacy, promoting mutual trust among countries in the region and in endeavouring to settle disputes through mediation. China expresses its appreciation to the OSCE for its efforts.

We welcome the priorities set by Austria as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office aimed at defusing armed conflicts, countering violent extremism and building mutual trust. China supports effective and pragmatic cooperation between the Security Council and the OSCE in the fields of peace and security, and it is our hope that the OSCE will continue to play an active and constructive role in upholding regional peace, security and stability.

With respect to the question of Ukraine, the parties concerned, including the OSCE, have made some positive efforts, which China welcomes. We hope that the situation in Ukraine will improve as soon as possible. We also hope that all parties concerned will fully implement resolution 2202 (2015) and the Minsk agreements and seek a comprehensive, lasting and balanced solution to the question of Ukraine through dialogue and consultation.

The international community should keep up its support for the diplomatic efforts of the parties concerned aimed at finding a political settlement of the question of Ukraine and at joining forces in contributing

to the achievement of peace, stability and development in the country at an early date.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I would like to thank Foreign Minister Kurz for his exhaustive briefing. I congratulate Austria for assuming the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is a pleasure to see so many old friends and colleagues in the Austrian delegation. We are looking forward to working together as members of the Troika this year and, as the incoming Chairperson-in-Office, in 2018.

The OSCE is the largest regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. At the very roots of both the United Nations and the OSCE lies the same vision and goal of a rules-based international order, anchored in multilateralism, territorial integrity and equal sovereignty of nations. We stand committed to those principles and to the need to respect them.

Synergies and complementarities between the United Nations and the OSCE remain still untapped potentials to be developed, considering that the OSCE stands as an essential forum for dialogue and cooperation, not only among its participating States, but also with its Mediterranean partners. In that regard, I would like to briefly outline what we consider two main priorities.

First, we deem that the OSCE plays an irreplaceable role in facilitating the settlement of most of the conflicts still affecting Europe. Its prompt engagement in the crisis in Ukraine — which Italy supported by contributing to the activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine — demonstrated the organization's vitality and capacity to respond with monitoring and mediation mechanisms. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and the OSCE's role in the Trilateral Contact Group are crucial to respect for and implementation of the Minsk agreements and to pursuing political efforts for a sustainable solution to the crisis. We also support the efforts of the Normandy format in seeking a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The OSCE mediation role in protracted conflicts must be underscored. With regard to Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria and Georgia, diplomatic tracks promoted and coordinated by the OSCE stand as the main frameworks to put an end to instability. As the incoming OSCE chair, in 2018, Italy will redouble efforts in that endeavour. Those conflicts are not frozen. Talks have

never stopped and should be relaunched especially for the sake of the communities that are involved and bear the heaviest burden.

Secondly, with regard to the Mediterranean dimension, as a member of the OSCE Troika, Italy is chairing the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation for maintaining relations with the six Mediterranean partner countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Emerging challenges and conflicts in the Mediterranean and Middle East have an impact on security for the entire OSCE membership. The organization has a role to play in engaging Mediterranean partner countries in political dialogue on transnational threats to our common security.

I would also like to point out the relevance of migration issues for the OSCE. With its holistic approach, field offices and missions, the organization is well equipped to contribute to the international efforts to manage the movement of populations, starting with the exchange of best practices and cooperation with the Mediterranean partners. We therefore welcome and strongly support the decision adopted by the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2016 in Hamburg endorsing that view on migration that we will prioritize on our agenda in 2017 and 2018.

As Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group and as a Mediterranean country, Italy will focus its programme on combating human trafficking, illicit trafficking of cultural property, cybersecurity, gender equality, economic cooperation, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises, and dialogue among think tanks and policy planners from both shores. To that end, we intend to constructively associate OSCE partner countries with the Contact Group activities. We will build on successful initiatives such as the Carabinieri training course organized by the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Unit in Vicenza, Italy, under the auspices of the OSCE training project entitled "Combating Human Trafficking along Migration Routes", which includes participants from partner countries and whose second phase will begin in June. We also have proposed organizing the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, under our chairmanship in Sicily in late October, with those priority issues on the agenda.

I should like to conclude by underscoring that the transnational nature of the challenges and threats

to international security that we confront requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. We are strongly committed to promoting such a cross-dimensional approach within both the United Nations and the OSCE. The nexus between security, development and human rights, with a special focus on conflict prevention and the role of women in mediation and in conflict and post-conflict situations, is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda. Therefore, it must be further integrated within the United Nations system and in its cooperation with regional organizations.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I wish to start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, on his becoming Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I would also like to thank him for his comprehensive briefing.

We welcome the significant contribution that the OSCE continues to make in supporting the maintenance of international peace and security as one of the largest regional security organizations. Its comprehensive approach to security, which includes the political, military, economic, environmental and human dimensions, is in line with the new global paradigm aimed at ensuring sustainable peace and development.

In that connection, we take note of the organization's efforts in conflict prevention and resolution as well as post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Particularly, we appreciate the important role that the OSCE is playing in the efforts to resolve the protracted and new conflicts in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, in cooperation with the United Nations and the European Union.

As we said yesterday during our debate on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886), dialogue and negotiation remain the only way to find a durable and diplomatic solution to some of those conflicts and extremely delicate issues of peace and security affecting States members of the OSCE. We cannot overemphasize the need for the political will and commitment of the parties to some of those conflicts to reach peaceful settlements but also to ensure that agreements are fully respected and implemented. Building the necessary trust and confidence between and among the parties is also very critical to making tangible progress. We are pleased to note that the Austrian chairmanship has made that one

of its main priorities. Most importantly, its commitment to continue exerting efforts to enhance informal and alternative channels of communication to improve mutual understanding and trust is very welcome.

As in other regions of the world, the growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism pose a significant security challenge to States members of the OSCE. The organization has been playing a very important role in preventing and combating terrorism by promoting a coordinated approach among member States. In that context, it is only appropriate that the Austrian chairmanship is placing greater emphasis on addressing youth radicalization and violent extremism in the entire OSCE area.

Promoting cooperation with other relevant regional and international organizations will be vital for the OSCE not only in countering terrorism but also in all the other dimensions of its work. Ethiopia attaches great importance to cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we appreciate the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations, which has been maintained through high-level dialogues and information-sharing, as well as cooperation in the field.

Finally, we wish the Austrian chairmanship success in implementing its priorities towards achieving greater security and stability in the entire OSCE area.

Mr. Delattre (France) (spoke in French): Today, I welcome the presence of Mr. Sebastian Kurz, the Austrian Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, at the Security Council table and congratulate his country on its assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for this year. In the challenging strategic environment that Europe is facing today, Austria knows that it can count on our full support to implement its programme of work, which is centred appropriately on the themes of security, conflict resolution and combating radicalization and terrorism. In our view, today more than ever, the OSCE serves as an indispensable toolbox for the security services in Europe, especially on the ground.

In my statement, I will take up two points: the central role of the OSCE in our efforts to end the Ukrainian crisis, and priority challenges on which, more generally, we must get the OSCE to focus.

The current crisis in eastern Ukraine is one of the most serious and dangerous violations of the founding principles of the OSCE, penned in Helsinki more than 40 years ago. It is therefore appropriate that this topic has been a top priority on the organization's agenda for the past three years. The OSCE has been up to the task in responding to the matter, which is a source of satisfaction for us. It has lived up to the responsibility that falls upon it by rapidly deploying monitoring missions and subsequently assuming a central role in ensuring the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which remain the only way forward for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

As I had the opportunity to say during yesterday's open debate on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886), France has been deeply concerned by the recent escalation of tensions on the ground, in particular around the town of Avdiivka, as well as its direct consequences in terms of the human toll and the worsening of the humanitarian situation. France is also determined, in conjunction with its German partners, to pursue mediation efforts within the Normandy format, as every bit of progress counts and we see no alternative solution for supporting the Minsk agreements.

The ministerial meeting held in Munich on Saturday made it possible to agree on specific commitments aimed at fostering a rapid improvement in the situation on the ground. Those commitments include the implementation of an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the protection of critical infrastructure, the effective disengagement of the most sensitive areas, the exchange of prisoners and access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to detention facilities. It is essential that they be implemented as soon as possible, and we count on the unanimous support of the Council in that respect.

We remain convinced more than ever that the OSCE and its field missions have an essential role to play in ensuring the practical implementation of decisions taken at the political level. In that regard, it is crucial that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine be in a position to fully and freely carry out its mandate. We reiterate our call for the respect for the full freedom of movement of its observers, whose security must be guaranteed, and condemn in the strongest terms any violation of these principles — whether it takes the form of intimidation, threats, destruction of equipment or denied access to certain areas. The involvement of the OSCE in securing local elections in the Donbas will

also be necessary, in ways that remain to be determined. Finally, I reiterate my country's commitment to defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. I note that France strongly condemns and does not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Beyond Ukraine, the OSCE remains more than ever an essential instrument for the promotion of peace and security in Europe, amid diverse threats. The situation should encourage its 57 members to abandon political posturing and rediscover the spirit of Helsinki, which, more than 40 years ago, gave rise to a common vision of security in Europe. In that context, we believe that the work of the OSCE should now focus on the following issues.

First is the resolution of regional conflicts. Beyond the Ukrainian case, we cannot accept the persistence of frozen conflicts in various parts of the European continent, whether in Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria or the separatist territories of Georgia. We are convinced that the role of the OSCE is central to each, together with the established mediation formats, in order to promote dialogue and restore confidence. Achieving tangible progress on each of those fronts is in the interest of the concerned countries, but also of the region as a whole. We are particularly attached to the outcome.

Next is the revival of conventional arms control in Europe. There can be no strategic stability without a set of common rules to frame military competition. We are therefore in favour of continuing discussions on arms control, confidence-building, transparency and risk-reduction measures, initiated last year under the German chairmanship in the context of the OSCE's structured dialogue.

Maintaining the centrality of the democracy and human rights pillar in the work of the OSCE is equally important. While a multidimensional approach has always been at the heart of the functioning of the OSCE, we are concerned about the tendency of some member States to increasingly politicize or even refuse to address human dimension issues. Specifically, the introduction of a selective approach to combating discrimination is unacceptable.

Last is the development of the operational role of the OSCE in response to certain emerging challenges. I am thinking of the fight against human trafficking, the prevention of radicalization, and climate change. The

OSCE must work on each of those issues, which are priority security challenges for Europe, and respond with concrete measures that go beyond mere public posturing and statement of positions.

I shall conclude my remarks by recalling the strong convergences between the action of the OSCE and that of the United Nations, whether on the ground — where their respective missions continue their integrated action, from the Balkans to the Caucasus and Central Asia — or on principles, with a common approach linking security, development and human rights concerns.

Mr. Rivas (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this informative meeting. I also thank the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration, Mr. Sebastian Kurz, for his detailed briefing.

As was mentioned yesterday (see S/PV.7886), at a time when the world is ravaged by new risks, such as violent extremism, nationalism, organized crimes and other factors, that are enmeshed in a feedback loop within unresolved conflicts, it is more important than ever to have the support of solid international, regional and sub-regional organizations acting in a coordinated manner.

Uruguay attaches the greatest importance to cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that respect, my country participates in valuable regional organizations and mechanisms, some long-standing like the Organization of American States and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, established pursuant to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, and others more recent, like the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which have proven their worth and have contributed to peace in the region. The role played by the regional organizations in matters of good offices, mediation and peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as in the appropriate implementation of their control mechanisms, is based on intimate knowledge of local realities and provides a crucial supplement to the work of the United Nations.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is the broadest organization dealing with

collective security. It covers a wide geographic area and has 57 members, as others have mentioned. It has a great deal of experience in resolving conflicts. Uruguay recognizes the organization's values and the ten principles of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which are in line with the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

We also recognize the contribution of the organization to the promotion of mechanisms for dialogue, confidence-building and conflict-resolution measures, as well as the work it carries out through its various missions on the ground that support the implementation of the relevant regional agreements. Among its priorities are important topics germane to international peace and security, such as the current conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Nagorno Karabakh and Ukraine, as well as the fight against radicalization and terrorism, and the protection of human rights. I would like to stress the momentum that accompanies the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the employment of a gender-sensitive approach in its work in various conflict situations.

Finally, I wish Austria every success in its chairmanship and in the attainment of its objectives, which will surely contribute to a peace that will transcend the European continent and benefit us all.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to welcome the holding of the annual meeting of the Security Council on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), born of the shared vision of 55 countries in Europe, North America and Asia of peace through cooperation.

On this important occasion, my delegation welcomes the participation of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Mr. Sebastian Kurz and Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration, whom I thank for his remarkable briefing.

Following up on the public debate that the Security Council held yesterday on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886), this morning's meeting provides an opportunity to look at the political and security situation in the Euro-Asian area. Bearing in mind its experience of two world wars in the space of one generation, Europe has met the challenges of its time by establishing an architecture for cooperation in the area of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. The various events that

have marked the life of the OSCE since the signing of the Helsinki Accord show, as if that were necessary, the relevance of its mission in the light of the scale and the serious nature of the challenges facing it. For that reason, I would like to commend the commitment of the Austrian chairmanship to bringing together the efforts of all its members with a view to resolving ongoing crises and conflicts, re-establishing mutual trust and limiting the growth of violent extremism and terrorism.

The Austrian chairmanship of the OSCE comes at a time when Europe is experiencing its most troubled times since the end of the Cold War. From Ukraine to Nagorno Karabakh, from Georgia to Transnistria, the OSCE is encountering serious challenges, in addition to cross-border challenges that include radicalization, terrorism, arms control, crime, cybercrime, migration and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings. For that reason, I share the view of the presidency that a strong OSCE is the very foundation of a safe Europe. Senegal is convinced that the peaceful settlement of conflicts throughout the world must be welcomed. We therefore also welcome the approach to conflicts through dialogue and cooperation, particularly between neighbouring countries.

The situation in eastern Ukraine is very serious. Following three years of conflict with a heavy loss of life totalling 10,000 persons, it is obvious that there can be no military solution to that conflict. It is therefore absolutely vital to enhance efforts to implement the Minsk agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015). My delegation therefore expresses its support for the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine and the Normandy format, and we commend their tireless efforts to find a political solution to the conflict.

Similarly, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict must be at the heart of OSCE's work. We are convinced that the OSCE will continue to work to convene a conference that could serve as the basis for a peaceful negotiated settlement of the crisis, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions. To that end, we must step up efforts to ensure that a cessation of hostilities agreement is reached and a peace process established under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, in the interest of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

I would also like to stress the importance of pursuing the peace efforts to resolve the Transnistria

conflict in the 5+2 negotiation format, on the one hand, and the Geneva international discussions seeking to resolve the Georgian conflict, on the other. We should also mention the need to deal with radicalization and violent extremism. We know that 10,000 persons from the OSCE region have gone to serve as foreign terrorist fighters. The priority must therefore be to prevent that phenomenon from deteriorating, as it undermines the very foundations of our societies.

Although the challenges are complex and enormous, they can still be resolved by a continent that has all the necessary tools to prevent conflicts and to maintain and establish peace, provided that the parties accept to resolve the ongoing conflicts while respecting international law. We would like to commend the idea of enhancing the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations, whose support would be very valuable in that regard.

In conclusion, I would like to express Senegal's support for the ideal underlying the Helsinki Final Act, namely, to establish a Euro-Atlantic and Atlantic-Asian region that is one of shared values of freedom, democracy and justice.

Mr. Kandeel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I extend a very heartfelt thanks to Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Foreign Minister of Austria and Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I thank him for his very detailed briefing on the future priorities of that organization. We have always emphasized the importance of regional organizations, including the OSCE, in the area of international peace and security under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. We support the Austrian priorities in tackling current challenges, namely, de-escalating conflicts in the region; countering extremism, in particular among youth; countering confrontations between countries; and maintaining opening communication between the parties to the various conflicts.

We also appreciate the efforts of the OSCE to find a political solution to various long-standing conflicts, including in Ukraine, Nagorno Karabakh, Georgia and elsewhere. In that connection, we reaffirm that there is no military solution to the conflicts in the region. There is no alternative to bolstering efforts to launch constructive dialogues aimed at seeking political solutions to conflicts. We urge all parties to shoulder their responsibility and demonstrate the necessary political will to solve those conflicts peacefully. We

note in particular the attempts by the OSCE to pool efforts for a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine, in line with the Minsk agreements, which offer the most promising framework for a lasting solution.

We also support the mediation efforts undertaken by various actors, which enjoy the respect of the parties themselves and of the international community. There are close links between security in Europe and security in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. We should strengthen our ties with the OSCE, in the framework of cooperation with our Mediterranean partners, in order to resolve crises in the region, first and foremost the crises in Libya and Syria.

I would also like to cite terrorism and extremism, which require the strengthening of dialogue between religions and civilizations in order to confront Islamophobia and solve problems related to immigration, the protection of refugees, and trafficking in human persons in the Mediterranean, among others. We call for a strengthening of international efforts — with the participation of all interested parties, including the OSCE — to eradicate terrorism through a global approach that is not limited to military and security solutions, but also takes into account the cultural, economic and developmental dimensions.

Egypt is one of the OSCE's partners in the Mediterranean and will spare no effort in working to achieve these goals, in particular by adopting cooperation frameworks between the OSCE and moderate religious institutions, such as the Al-Azhar mosque, in order to enhance religious dialogue. This is one of the most important areas of work in the framework of a global strategy to counter terrorism and extremism.

Common security in the Mediterranean requires identifying the root causes of existing problems. It also requires seeking lasting and permanent solutions through constructive dialogue among the countries of the region. Egypt would like in the near future to see greater cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE, so that our shared vision can be translated into concrete measures that will help to strengthen our cooperation.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ukraine.

I wish to thank Minister Kurz for his comprehensive presentation of the priorities of the Austrian

chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2017. We appreciate his personal dedication in trying to find effective responses on the part of the OSCE community to the significant security threats and challenges confronting the participating States.

As recognized at the OSCE, the ongoing aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and its severe consequences remain among the top threats to European security. It is important that defusing tensions and facilitating the resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine be identified as priorities of the Austrian chairmanship. Three years ago, the Russian Federation effectively violated the United Nations Charter and all 10 principles of the Helsinki Final Act by resorting to armed aggression against the sovereign State of Ukraine, the illegal occupation of Crimea and hybrid warfare in Donbas. The re-establishment of full respect for these principles is the way to restore the security order based on the OSCE process and the lessons of the Second World War.

We therefore commend the determination of the Austrian chairmanship to protect the OSCE's fundamental principles and commitments, as it recently demonstrated by condemning Russia's unilateral measures on recognizing the so-called documents issued by illegal structures in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

These actions on the part of Russia once again defied the OSCE principles and the Minsk agreements. We welcome the readiness of the chairmanship to exercise leadership in performing its functions, which is so urgently needed in these turbulent times for the OSCE community.

As the recent spike in hostilities near Avdiivka in Donbas has shown, the situation in the conflict-affected areas remains volatile and unpredictable. Escalation is possible whenever the Russian Federation considers it politically necessary or just convenient. The military assault by the hybrid Russian forces on Avdiivka, accompanied by massive shelling along the entire line of contact, demonstrated Russia's persistent unwillingness to honour its Minsk commitments, including their first provision of a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. Russia's political goal of undermining Ukraine, which set in motion its aggression against my country three years ago, remains unchanged. Instead of a full and good-faith implementation of the Minsk commitments,

Russia is resorting to political and military provocations, blackmail and political pressure.

We commend the immediate response of the OSCE chairmanship and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in highlighting the scale of the offensive of the hybrid Russian forces and of its grave humanitarian impact. We appreciate the international diplomatic and political pressure brought to bear on the Russian Federation to stop the escalation, which has contributed to some improvement in the security situation in the conflict area. A persistent focus, in particular at the OSCE and in the Security Council, on security and a peaceful resolution is needed to discourage Russia from future provocations and escalations and to force it to implement in full the commitments undertaken.

The OSCE, the Trilateral Contact Group and its humanitarian subgroup should pay particular attention to achieving the immediate and unconditional release of Ukrainian citizens who remain illegally detained as hostages or political prisoners in the occupied areas of Donbas and in Crimea, as well as in the Russian Federation. The international community must maintain a united position in order to secure their release.

The resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine, as the Russia-instigated conflict is called in the OSCE, requires not only a peaceful resolution of the situation in Donbas, with full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also the de-occupation of the Crimean peninsula, which is an integral part of Ukraine.

As the illegal occupation continues, so do the gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by Russia's occupation authorities.

In its resolution 71/205, entitled "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)", adopted on 19 December 2016, the General Assembly was absolutely clear about the extrajudicial killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, politically motivated prosecutions, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, violence, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment against the residents of Crimea. The freedoms of expression, religion or belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly have been suppressed.

We must use all of the diplomatic assets and international instruments at our disposal to make sure that Crimea does not become an exclusion zone with

regard to basic human rights. We encourage the OSCE chairmanship and institutions to pay close attention to the people in the occupied territory and to the alleviation of their plight.

We welcome the intention of the Austrian chairmanship to strengthen the OSCE as an organization that can effectively and in a timely manner fulfil the tasks entrusted to it by participating States.

The implementation of the Minsk agreements and the OSCE's role in terms of monitoring, verification and mediation require adequate resources. We encourage Minister Kurz's support for the efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine to facilitate the resolution of the conflict in Donbas, which was started by Russia. Among the immediate tasks are ensuring the effectiveness of the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire and of the withdrawal of weapons, and the establishment of permanent monitoring at the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian State border, as set out in the Minsk agreements. The Mission's monitoring capabilities should be strengthened through increased use of high-technology equipment, including unmanned aerial vehicles, cameras and night-vision equipment.

Special Monitoring Mission monitors face restrictions on movement and intimidation by the hybrid Russian forces in Donbas in their everyday activities. This is quite alarming. We encourage further discussions under the Austrian chairmanship on how to ensure security before, during and after the local elections in Donbas as a key element of the political settlement of the conflict, which will be possible only after all the necessary security prerequisites have been put in place.

We welcome and support the Austrian chairmanship's priorities on strengthening instruments for conflict prevention and resolution, modernizing OSCE confidence- and security-building measures and launching a structured dialogue addressing the prevailing threats and the possible way forward.

My country is suffering as a result of terrorism and the terrorist groups regularly sent from the Russian Federation into Donbas through the uncontrolled segment of the State border with Ukraine. We are therefore interested in a sustained focus on the practical implementation of the counter-terrorism declaration adopted in Hamburg, as well as in strengthening border security, including by countering the phenomenon of

foreign terrorist fighters and other non-State actors. We see benefit in fostering international cooperation in these areas. In the meantime, Ukraine will continue to take legal steps to counter terrorist activity on its territory, in particular by bringing terrorists to justice and by submitting to the International Court of Justice the case of Russia's violation of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

We support the intention of the Austrian chairmanship to dedicate special attention to cybersecurity and the further development of confidence- and security-building measures in the area. Ukraine is ready to share its own experience in investigating and countering cyberattacks on critical energy infrastructure.

The human dimension is at the core of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. We support the Austrian chairmanship's determination to promote enhanced implementation of respective commitments,

including in such areas as freedom of assembly and association, freedom of media and expression, freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and non-discrimination. Strengthened cooperation with civil society should be an integral part of these efforts. We believe that such thematic issues as countering State propaganda, eradicating the phenomenon of political prisoners, combating torture and forced disappearances, and ensuring the rights of internally displaced persons and refugees should stay high on the OSCE agenda. There can be no security without respect to human dignity, the rule of law and fundamental human rights.

In conclusion, let me wish Austria a successful chairmanship and practical outcomes in addressing key security threats and challenges that undermine peace and stability in the OSCE space.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.